

Economist & Sun/Sun-Tribune

DIVERSIONS

Sound advice



Ryan Mason

Game On

Five favourites small fraction of great games

The past year was action-packed at the video store.

But what was the best game of the year? Here are five personal selections.

No. 1: Project Gotham Racing 2 (\$64.99) for the Xbox console. It's an action-packed racing game in which you perform moves such as 360s while racing to earn Kudos points and, eventually, get better vehicles.

This game is also compatible with Xbox live so you can race against people around the globe.

No. 2: Ratchet and Clank (\$24.99) for PlayStation. In this action-adventure game, you take on the role of a squirrel-like creature and use more than 50 different weapons and cool gadgets to defeat your enemies.

No. 3: Metroid Prime (\$39.99) for the GameCube console. In this action-RPG you take on the role of a cyborg named Samus Aran.

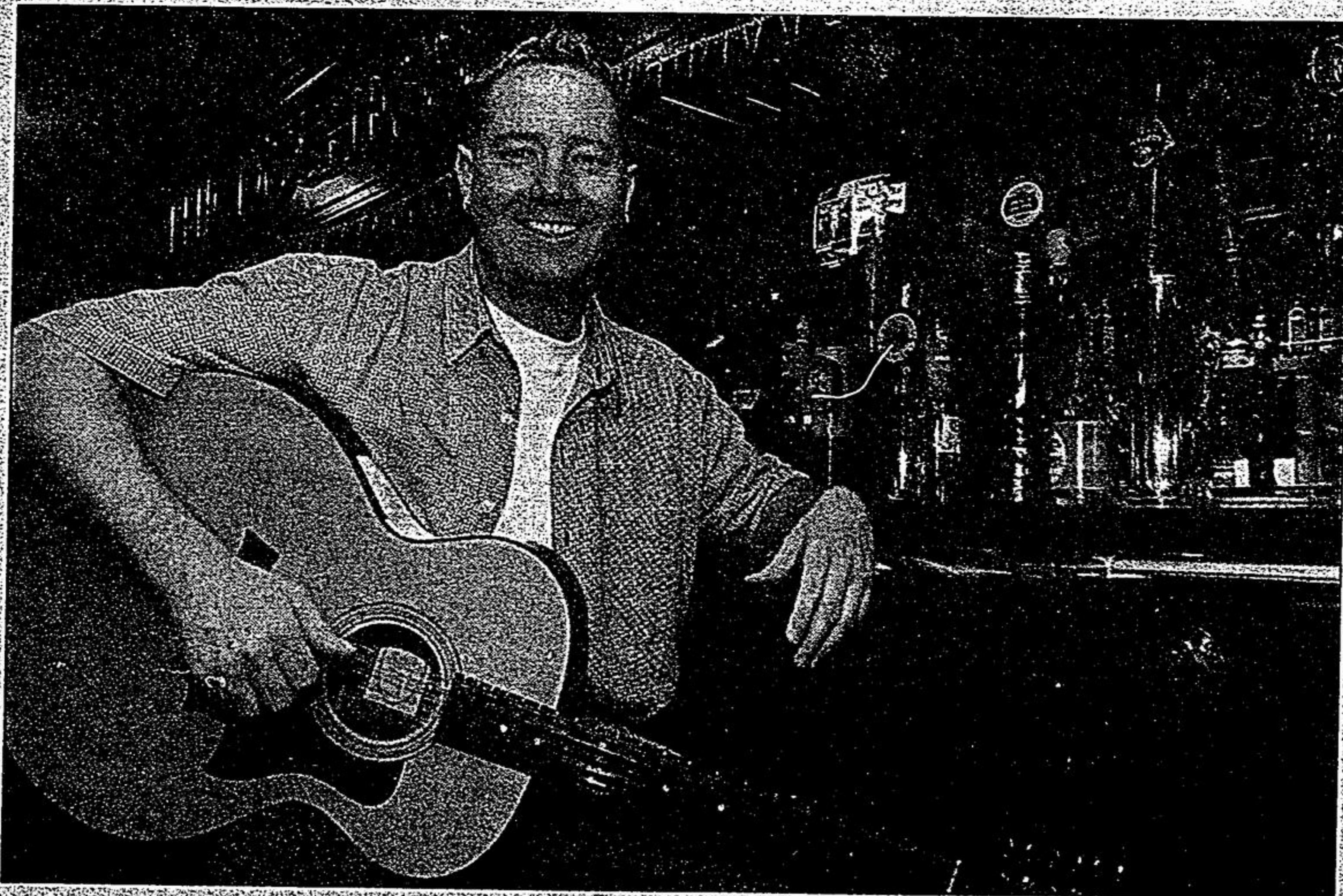
You must now defeat the evil metroids and other space beings and kill all evil.

No. 4: Mario Golf: Toadstool Tour (\$69.99) for GameCube.

In this game, you golf using your favorite Mario characters including Yoshi and Wario.

No. 5: Voodoo Vince (\$49.99) for Xbox. In this action game, you take control of a magical voodoo doll named Vince, who has to save his master, Madame Charmaine, from an evil bad guy who tries to take her zombie dust.

Ryan Mason, 13, is a video game enthusiast, a YRNG newspaper carrier and president of his school council.



STAFF PHOTO/SJOERD WITTEVEEN

John Blue entertains in bars, such as the Duchess of Markham.

Play bars for love of music, not money, performers say

BY MARTIN DERBYSHIRE
Staff Writer

They don't do it for the money, although it can help pay a few bills. Belting out rock classics while warm and fuzzy singles on the hunt stumble around a tiny dance floor or testosterone-driven hockey fans pore over the highlights of the latest Leafs effort may not sound like your idea of a solid Saturday night.

But, for the dozens of cover bands playing weekend gigs at local bars and pubs around York Region, it does.

They do it because they love to play.

"We must love doing it," said Gord Jones, lead singer for the six-piece classic rock cover band Stonefinger, which plays Saturday nights at various venues around the region.

'A lot of live acts don't play their own music now. Back in the 1970s and '80s, bands like Rush and Max Webster started out playing the (GTA) bar scene. No more. Now, people want to know every song.'

"Especially considering we're constantly lifting all that equipment all over the place.

As well as bars in Newmarket and Aurora, Stonefinger is one of 10 bands that play regularly at the 110-seat Col. Mustards in Markham.

Manager Tony Hallett says they are one of the bar's more popular draws.

"We have a more mature crowd that likes the oldies and

classic rock," he said. "People definitely come for the entertainment and our regulars don't come if they don't know the band."

Mr. Hallett, a veteran in the industry, says times have definitely changed for bands in bars.

"A lot of live acts don't play their own music now. It's mostly cover bands," he said. "Back in the 1970s and '80s, bands like Rush and Max Webster started out playing the (GTA) bar scene. No more. Now, people want to know every song."

Mr. Jones had a group in the '80s that played original music. He and others in the band still write their own stuff, but save those tunes for the basement rehearsals and possible publishing contracts.

"You can get a lot more work doing covers, especially in York Region," he said. "Basically, we're like a juke box. To tell you the truth, I've gone to see other bands, sort of checking out the

competition, and those bands not playing covers aren't getting the crowds. Playing covers makes it a lot easier to book gigs and the thing is, I like the songs we're playing."

Like the Sly and the Family Stone classic you may one day hear at a Stonefinger show, the band is really a family affair. Mr. Jones sings and his father Gord Jones Sr. is on the drums. Ron Bisset plays keyboards and his son Alex Bisset is on bass guitar. Mr. Jones' brother-in-law Dwight Graham plays guitar and Tom Meures, a friend from work, plays guitar and saxophone.

With six members, nobody in the band has been able to quit their day job and live off what they make, but Mr. Jones says the \$100 a piece they usually pull in isn't that bad.

"We've played gigs for no money, not that we want to, but we do it because we love to," he said. "To make a living, you'd have to play pretty much every

night and most bars have bands on just Fridays and Saturdays. The truth is, we would have to work just as hard as any full-time job lugging all that equipment around and I'm not sure I'd want to."

John Blue doesn't mind lugging his gear around and is a little more serious about music as a full-time job.

The acoustic guitar solo artist, a 12-year Markham resident, plays smaller pubs and bars around York Region as often as he can — up to four nights a week.

"I can't complain, I work only four hours a night," he said. "Can you make money? Sure, if you're good. Not to sound pompous, but it's true. The bottom line is I'm doing what I love and my father always told me, 'do a job you like and you'll never work a day in your life,' and that's the way I feel."

"A lot of younger musicians

See HAPPY, page 13.

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